



Consumer Services Department

Tel: (305) 375-1250



Fax: (305) 375-4120



DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
140 WEST FLAGLER STREET
SUITE 903
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33130-1561

E-mail: consumer@miamidade.gov

CSD *News Release*

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PUBLIC HEARING ON PREDATORY LENDING FOR GOVERNMENT CENTER

A public hearing about Predatory Lending takes place next Tuesday, October 1, in the Miami-Dade County Board of Commission Chambers at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 111 NW First Street, downtown Miami beginning at 9:30.

The event is being organized by the Anti-Predatory Lending Workgroup appointed last December by Miami-Dade District 3 Commissioner, Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, in response to public outcry against predatory lending practices which had led to two elderly citizens being evicted from their homes.

The main purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony from victims of predatory lending with a view to helping the Workgroup develop a better understanding of the extent of the problem in Miami-Dade County. The testimonials will be facilitated by Miami-Dade County Consumer Advocate, Leonard Elias, who represents the Consumer Services Department on the Anti-Predatory Lending Workgroup.

Commissioner Carey-Shuler will herself participate along with State Senator Kendrick Meek and Rep. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall.

"I am encouraging all Miamians to get involved and become change agents in the home mortgage loan industry by helping us educate our elderly, disadvantaged and uninformed about the perils and pitfalls associated with borrowing money," Commissioner Carey-Shuler said.

“Participation in the public hearing will heighten your awareness of the problem facing these individuals in this county and around the nation,” she added.

Predatory lenders use credit mechanisms such as Pay Day Loans, Motor Vehicle Title Loans, Home Improvement Loans, Mortgage Refinancing, automobile financing and Rent to Own transactions to exploit persons in vulnerable and sometimes desperate economic circumstances by offering them credit at exorbitant interest rates.

Some of these credit mechanisms such as motor vehicle title loans and pay day loans are regulated by State and County laws. These laws notwithstanding, predatory lending remains a problem in Miami-Dade County.

Since being appointed by Commissioner Carey-Shuler the Anti-Predatory Lending Workgroup has staged or participated in public education fora including a panel discussion in Liberty City last May, a ‘Round Table’ in July at the South Dade Office of District 9 Commissioner Dennis Moss and a seminar at the Joseph Caleb Community Center earlier this month. Consumer Advocate Leonard Elias has also been interviewed on radio about the problem.

These events are meant to help educate consumers about how to protect themselves against predatory lenders, including how to recognize the warning signs of a predatory loan.

A feature of Monday’s public hearing will a presentation by Cecilia la Villa-Travieso of the housing corporation Fannie Mae.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

Patrick Smikle, Public Information Officer; (305) 375-5745;

Email: smiklep@miamidade.gov

Leonard Elias, Consumer Advocate; (305) 375-4199; Email: le28@miamidade.gov

Cathy Grimes Peel, Deputy Director, CSD; (305) 375-4666; Email: cpeel@miamidade.gov

The Miami Dade Consumer Services Department is an agency of Miami-Dade County government that protects consumers through complaint mediation, business regulation, and consumer education. The Department operates the Consumer Hotline (305) 375-3677, a central telephone number for consumer complaints and information.